

What is Claimed is:

1. A ladder, comprising:

a first column assembly including a first column and a ring coupled to the first column proximate a distal end thereof;

5 a second column assembly including a second column and a sleeve coupled to the second column proximate a proximal end thereof;

the second column being at least partially disposed within a lumen defined by an internal surface of the first column;

10 the sleeve including an external guiding surface for contacting the internal surface of the first column; and

the ring including an internal guiding surface for contacting an exterior surface of the second column.

15 2. The ladder of claim 1, wherein the first column assembly and the second column assembly contact one another only where the internal guiding surface contacts the exterior surface of the second column and where the external guiding surface contacts the internal surface of the first column.

20 3. The assembly of claim 1, wherein the first column comprises a first material and the sleeve comprises a second material different from the first material.

4. The assembly of claim 4, wherein the first material and the second material comprise materials which are unlikely to gall when placed in sliding contact with one another.

5. The assembly of claim 4, wherein the first material and the second material comprise materials which provide a relatively low friction interface when placed in sliding contact with one another.

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6. The assembly of claim 4, wherein the first material comprises aluminum and the second material comprises a polymeric material.

7. The assembly of claim 1, wherein the second column comprises a first material
10 and the ring comprises a second material different from the first material.

8. The assembly of claim 7, wherein the first material and the second material comprise materials which are unlikely to gall when placed in sliding contact with one another.

15 9. The assembly of claim 7, wherein the first material and the second material comprise materials which provide a relatively low friction interface when placed in sliding contact with one another.

10. The ladder of claim 7, wherein the first column assembly further includes a sleeve
20 coupled to the first column proximate a proximal end thereof;
the sleeve including an external guiding surface for contacting an internal surface of another column.

11. The ladder of claim 1, wherein the second column assembly further includes a second ring coupled to the second column by a second connector;

the second ring including an internal guiding surface for contacting an exterior surface of another column.

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12. The ladder of claim 11, further including a collar disposed about the second column;

the collar being disposed between the sleeve and the second ring; and

the collar being dimensioned so that the connector will contact a first landing surface of

10 the collar and the second connector will contact a second landing surface of the collar when the ladder is placed in a collapsed state.

13. The ladder of claim 1, wherein the ring is coupled to the first column in a manner which allows the ring to float relative to the first column.

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14. The ladder of claim 1, wherein the ring is coupled to the first column by a connector which retains the ring in axial and radial directions relative to the first column while, at the same time, permitting some relative motion between the first column and the ring.

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15 The ladder of claim 14, wherein the relative motion provided between the first column and the ring has a magnitude which is sufficient to allow the ring to assume a position in which the internal guiding surface of the ring is disposed in coaxial alignment with the external guiding surface of the sleeve.

16. The ladder of claim 1, wherein the ring is coupled to the column by a connector comprising an annular wall and a shoulder extending over a distal end of the first column.

5 17. The ladder of claim 1, wherein the sleeve further includes a landing surface and the first column includes a stop.

18. The ladder of claim 17, wherein the landing surface of the sleeve contacts the stop when a desired level of extension between the first column and the second column has been
10 reached.

19. The ladder of claim 17, wherein the stop comprises an inward projection.

20. The ladder of claim 19, wherein the inward projection comprises a portion of a
15 wall of the first column which has been displaced inwardly.

21. The ladder of claim 1, wherein the sleeve is coupled to the second column at an interlocking connection.

20 22. The ladder of claim 21, wherein the sleeve includes a plurality of protuberances which are received within openings of the second column for fixing the sleeve to the second column.

23. The ladder of claim 1, further including a ferrule interposed between the external surface of the first column and an annular wall of the connector.

24. The ladder of claim 23, wherein the ferrule and the first column are fixed to one another at a friction interconnection.

25. The ladder of claim 23, wherein the ferrule and the first column are fixed to one another at an interference fit joint formed between the ferrule and the first column.

26. The ladder of claim 23, wherein the ferrule and the connector are fixed to one another at an interlocking connection.

27. The ladder of claim 26, wherein the interlocking connection comprises at least one protrusion of the ferrule which is received by a hole of the connector.

28. A method for assembling a ladder, comprising the steps of:
providing a connector having an annular wall defining a socket and a hole communicating with the socket;

inserting a ring into the socket of the connector;

inserting a ferrule into the socket of the connector;

locking the ferrule relative to the connector; and

inserting a column into a receptacle defined by the ferrule.

29. The method of claim 28, wherein an interference fit joint is formed when the column is inserted into the receptacle defined by the ferrule.

30. The method of claim 28, wherein the step of locking the ferrule relative to the
5 connector comprises directing at least one protrusion of the ferrule into a hole of the connector.

31. A ladder, comprising:
a plurality of columns disposed in a nested arrangement for relative lengthwise
movement in a telescopic fashion;
10 a latch mechanism for selectively locking a second column relative the first column;
a button operatively coupled to the latch mechanism for actuating the latch mechanism;
the button having a depression dimensioned to receive a tip portion of a thumb of a hand;
the button being positioned so that the depression receives the tip portion of the thumb
while the first column is grasped between a palm of the hand and at least one finger of the hand.

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32. The ladder of claim 31, wherein the latch mechanism is biased to assume a locked position.

33. The ladder of claim 31, wherein the latch mechanism is biased to assume a locked
20 position by a spring.

34. A ladder, comprising:
a plurality of rung units;

each rung unit comprising a left column, a right column, and a rung extending between the left column and the right column;

the left columns being disposed in a nested arrangement for relative lengthwise movement in a telescopic fashion;

5 the right columns being disposed in a nested arrangement for relative lengthwise movement in a telescopic fashion; and

a strap disposed around the rungs for selectively precluding relative movement between the rung units.

10 35. A ladder, comprising:

a plurality of columns disposed in a nested arrangement for relative lengthwise movement in a telescopic fashion;

each column being coupled to a rung by a connector;

the connector comprising an annular wall and a lip extending over a distal end of the
15 column so that the weight of a person standing on the rung is transferred to the distal end of the column by the lip of the connector.

36. The ladder of claim 35, wherein the connector comprises a metallic material.

20 37. The ladder of claim 36, wherein the connector comprises aluminum.